



**Tom Barrett**  
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

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My vision for Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is one of strong leadership, clear accountability, and successful outcomes. I see an MPS:

- That sets high world-class standards for all schools and all students and, under the leadership of a visionary superintendent, holds schools accountable for achieving those standards.
- Where the leader is empowered to focus on those goals and is not distracted by politics or unclear accountability.
- Where high quality teachers are eager to start and finish their careers, because they have the professional and classroom resources they need to support their instructional expertise; clear stable expectations; and additional incentives to tackle challenging problems.
- Where parents, students, the community and taxpayers know exactly who to hold accountable.
- Where parents are guaranteed a voice in their children's education and have someone they can contact directly who can address their concerns.
- Where decisions are driven by high quality research and the district is supported by an external research entity focused solely on tracking and supporting MPS.
- Where more dollars are directed into the classroom by implementing fiscal efficiencies and consolidating non-instructional operations such as facilities and purchasing.
- That does not need to be compelled to improve by corrective action plans and threats of withheld funds, but is compelled by a shared goal to make every child reach their potential.
- Where more students graduate with the skills and desire to pursue post-secondary opportunities which will ensure the quality workforce we need for this city to thrive.

To achieve this vision, it is imperative that we hire a strong, effective superintendent, establish clear and high expectations, provide that superintendent with the fiscal and political support he or she needs to achieve those goals, and hold the superintendent accountable for success. Unfortunately, it is next to impossible to achieve these steps under the current system, as the current outcomes in MPS demonstrate.

Under the current system there isn't any clear accountability -- and blame is shifted among the board, administration, superintendent and other external entities. MPS is in need of a strong, reform-minded superintendent that is looking to come to a district where they can implement real reform.

Potential MPS leaders would be frustrated under the current system where they have to cater to the changing directives of board leadership. And they would certainly be frustrated by recent actions by the current school board such as redirecting \$300,000 for an office of accountability that shifts key powers away from the administration to an elected board, or redirecting \$250,000 to pay private lawyers to support the status quo and resist reform efforts.

It's clear, we need to create an environment where a visionary leader has the stability and support he or she needs to get the job done.

As mayor, I would empower the next MPS superintendent to apply his or her expertise to develop specific strategies. In New York, Joel Klein released his Children First reform plan details several months after being hired by Mayor Bloomberg--and our community would similarly give our next leader an opportunity to fashion a plan specific to our community needs and challenges.

I will encourage our new leader to include successful reform strategies such as:

- Identifying consistently low performing schools (based on comprehensive, clear data) and implementing significant turnaround reforms or closing them so they do not continue to fail future students.
- Creating incentives to attract high-quality teachers -- particularly to low-performing schools or hard-to-staff subjects and providing teachers with the professional development and classroom resources that research shows can improve teacher effectiveness.
- Partnering with an external research entity that will be established to focus on MPS to help drive important policy decisions and track key initiatives.

I will also continue to call upon other community stakeholders to support our parents and students within and outside the classroom.

The specifics of these education reform strategies will continue to be refined as we engage stakeholders in this conversation and as the MPS Innovation and Improvement Council continues its work with DPI and MPS.

Some may argue that the reforms I have laid out could be implemented under the current system -- however, the key is not in just laying out reforms but actually having a system in place where they will be implemented successfully. The current system has been given too many chances to do so and has failed repeatedly. I haven't seen a compelling case that positive changes are sustainable.

Keeping the status quo is the path of least resistance, but it is also the path that is failing our students. The stakes are too high and I am determined to do the right thing for our children and community.